

## Questions and Answers on Implementing a Simplified Food Stamp Program

*Q1: What is a Mini-Simplified Food Stamp Program?*

A: A Simplified Food Stamp Program (SFSP) is an option that allows State agencies to implement the rules and procedures established under its Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program or Food stamp Program rules and procedures, or both. The mini-Simplified Food Stamp Program (mini-SFSP) is a subset of the broader authority and allows a State agency to replace its TANF or FSP work-related rules with the other program's rules. Contact your regional FNS representative for additional information.

*Q2: What role does the SFSP have in the new interim final rule issued by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF)?*

A: New ACF rules allow States to “deem” families who work the maximum number of hours permitted under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) rules, but still fall short of the 20-hour core activity requirement, as having met that requirement. ACF is limiting this “deeming” policy to States that combine the FSP and TANF benefit amounts when calculating maximum hours. This can be done through the mini-SFSP option that simply permits States to count the value of food stamps in determining maximum hours of work. Although the preamble to the TANF interim final rule indicates that States would need to adopt FSP workfare program and conform TANF and FSP exemption policies under the SFSP, we have been informed by FNS that this is not necessary. The mini-SFSP would allow States to count the value of food stamps and to “deem” any hours that fall short of the standard. The TANF work experience or community service program can serve in place of the FSP workfare program.

*Q3: Does a State have to change its age or other exemptions to deem in TANF?*

A: No, it does not have to. Because ACF intended to qualify States for deeming if they combined FSP and TANF benefits, a State must assign a work obligation in FSP to the household. Therefore, the State should notify FNS of its desire to implement a mini-SFSP that replaces FSP work obligation rules with TANF rules. This means that the State can require all TANF/FSP households to participate in work activities – even those with children under age 6 (who would otherwise be exempt from food stamp work requirements), if they so choose. It is the combining of benefits (by replacing FSP work obligation rules with TANF work obligation rules) that allows a State to deem that household if it cannot work its full obligation because of the FLSA provision. The State does not have to change its age exemption rules to do this.

*Q4: Does a State have to import its TANF sanction policy for FSP cases?*

A. No, but it may. A household member exempt from FSP work requirements because he/she is subject to a TANF work requirement and who fails to meet that requirement must be sanctioned in accordance with FSP disqualification procedures—unless he or she meets another FSP exemption criterion. The State Food Stamp agency must apply the mandatory minimum disqualification period on the household member and, if the sanctioned member is the head of the food stamp household, it may apply the optional whole household disqualification, if it has chosen that option.

If the household member meets another exemption criterion, he/she is not subject to FSP disqualification. However, under the comparable disqualification provisions of 7 CFR 273.7(f)(7)(iv), the State agency may impose its TANF disqualification on the individual household member. For example, in a State in which the State agency chose not to align its TANF/FSP age exemption criteria, a household member responsible for the care of a child under 6 is sanctioned by TANF for a failure to comply. Although the individual remains exempt from FSP sanction, the State agency has the option of applying the identical TANF disqualification on the individual.

For additional information see the Food and Nutrition Service's web site at: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/whats\\_new.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/whats_new.htm). Under the heading, "What's New," item 25 provides a sample letter for States to request a mini-SFSP and additional Q&As on implementing the mini-SFSP.